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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAR ES SALAAM 000687

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/4/15

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SUBJECT: CODEL INHOFE DISCUSSES BURUNDI, ARTICLE 98, AU
STANDBY FORCE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KIKWETE

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Michael S. Owen for reasons
1.5 (b) and (d)

1. (U) Senator James Inhofe (OK), Senator Mike Enzi (WY), and Congressman John Boozman (AR) met with Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete during a brief stop-over in Dar es Salaam on April 1. Kikwete had just returned from parliamentary capital Dodoma, where he had deposited his nomination papers to seek the ruling CCM party nomination for the presidency, and was in a decidedly upbeat mood.

2. (C) Asked about regional stability, Kikwete voiced some optimism about Burundi rebels FNL-Palipehutu coming to the bargaining table. Acknowledging that there would be "ups and downs" in the process, he said nonetheless the first signs are encouraging. He noted that senior FNL negotiators are currently in Dar es Salaam, and that talks would proceed for at least the following week. The Minister said the FNL leadership realized that "the train is already leaving the station," and that failure to negotiate now could even further marginalize the group. He said the GOT is suspicious of the FNL leadership, but is nonetheless prepared to play a helpful role, within the context of overall South African leadership.

3. (C) Senator Inhofe noted that Tanzania is losing US military assistance because of its refusal to sign an Article 98 agreement, and asked if that decision might be reconsidered when a new President is elected later this year. Weighing his words carefully, Kikwete claimed that the decision on Article 98 was not a Foreign Ministry decision, but rather had been made by the Justice Ministry and the "leadership," presumably President Mkapa. Although he stopped short of saying the decision could be reconsidered, by distancing himself from the decision he held out the possibility that if he becomes President Kikwete later this year, he could reconsider without having to reverse himself.

4. (C) Senator Inhofe voiced strong USG support for the African Union's standby peacekeeping brigades. Kikwete said only that the standby brigades were a good idea, but would need a great deal of support.

5. (U) Codel Inhofe departed post before this cable was drafted and did not clear on it.

OWEN